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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; ANTI-SEMITISM; CHAVEZ; TRI-BORDER AREA;
LATIN AMERICAN ARMS RACE; 02/02/07

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Today's international lead stories include Iranian President Ahmadinejad's anti-Semitism; President Chavez' nationalization plans; the USG's concern over the Tri-Border Area; and Latin America increasing arms race.

2. OPINION PIECES

- "The new face of anti-Semitism"

Business-financial "El Cronista" carries an opinion piece by Agustin M. Romero professor, Master in International Relations, National University of Buenos Aires, who writes (02/02) "... Historical revisionism and (recent) attacks against the State of Israel have become the two sides of modern anti-Semitism.

"The big danger is the fact that those declaring anti-Israel hatred are heads of State that are members of the UN...

"No head of State since Hitler has publicly voiced so much resentment and hostility towards a people and a country as Iranian President Ahmedinejad did. These kinds of statements plus Iran challenging the UN Security Council's non proliferation demands make it impossible to abide by the UN Charter's most important objective, which is ensuring international peace and security."

- "Trenches"

Marcelo Cantelmi, international editor of leading "Clarín," comments (02/02) "... Wealthy countries often understand that Venezuela is controversial and boisterous, although far from being out of control, and that its government should be kept within institutions like the Mercosur trade bloc rather than suffer the hostility of hawks from here and there...

"A strong fan of headlines, Hugo Chavez... announced yesterday that he will broaden his nationalization plan although it will basically consist in the purchase of assets not expropriations. Also, the larger governmental control of the Orinoco Strip oil exploitation, which he also declared, will not change the rules affecting major US oil corporations, which by the way, have not complained about it."

- "'We should not demonize Hugo Chavez'"

Elisabetta Pique, Rome-based correspondent for daily-of-record "La Nación," writes (02/02) "The head of the Italian Lower House, Fausto Bertinotti, has no doubts that Latin America is going through a 'major process of political rebirth,' in which 'we should not demonize Chavez.'

"... Asked about Hugo Chavez Bertinotti said 'I believe that the attempt to divide the hemisphere in order to deny the existence of a general phenomenon is a malicious strategy... I think a major political rebirth process is taking place in Latin America based on two elements - the first one is a pact between the new leaders and their peoples, a new democratic foundation following every mega crises and the disasters of right-wing experiences; and the second one is the importance now attributed to social justice and the acknowledgement of native peoples' rights.'

"Asked whether Chavez should be included in this rebirth process, Bertinotti answered, 'Of course, one would be short-sighted not to notice that Chavez has popular support. On the other hand, I do not believe we should demonize Chavez, but learn to respect the autonomy of governments and their peoples. A democratic government decision to manage the economy should not be considered something bad.'"

- "The US reiterates its concern over the Tri-Border Area"

Hugo Alconada Mon, Washington-based correspondent for daily-of-record "La Nacion," writes (02/02) "In spite of repeated objections by the governments of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay, the US Department of State reiterated yesterday that the Tri-Border Area still raises 'high concern' in the US due to the alleged presence of Hezbollah members or supporters.

"In a press conference, the chief spokesperson of the US diplomacy, Sean McCormack, said 'It is a terrorist organization with significant (financial) resources and experience, and proven ability to launch terrorist attacks.'

"Asked about the USG's position on the increasing ties between Iran and Venezuela as well as Hezbollah's eventual insertion in the region, after the US Treasury Department issued a warning last December on the Tri-Border Area, McCormack said 'That is of great concern to us and certainly something that our counter-terrorism

people closely monitor.'

"... According to a US military intelligence source, 'Our conclusion is that there are radical Islamic groups all over Latin America and the Caribbean, not only on the Tri-Border Area.'"

13. EDITORIALS

- "Regional focus on arms race"

Leading "Clarín" editorializes (02/02) "One of Latin America's most frequent concerns lately is the role of the military and their relations with civilian society and national defense.

"In some countries, like Mexico or Colombia, the military have major direct participation in the struggle against drug-trafficking. In others, like Brazil, the military participate in the fight against racketeering and in defense of public security. There is also an increase in the purchase of arms and new military equipment in countries like Venezuela, with an impact on the region, thereby drawing further attention to the role of the armed forces within the security and defense agenda.

"... However, a new kind of military involvement in domestic security issues deserves a serious follow-up to prevent it from resulting in more weakness than strength. Public security militarization, the 'politicization' of armed forces and the arms race usually make our countries more unsafe."

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